

MERRY CHRISTMAS THE ENGLISH WAY

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- \* Das erste Kochbuch für ein „englisches Weihnachtsfest“
- \* 111 authentische Rezepte vom Lifestyle-Haus Fortnum & Mason
- \* Edel und sinnlich: So wird die Weihnachtszeit zum Hochgenuss
- \* Von der Kochkoryphäe Tom Parker-Bowles

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 CHRISTIAN

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REZEPTE &  
GESCHICHTEN

FORTNUM & MASON  
EST 1707

# A VERY BRITISH CHRISTMAS

REZEPTE & GESCHICHTEN

TOM PARKER BOWLES

 CHRISTIAN



9	Vorwort
10	Edward Bawden
12	Einleitung
16	Guy Fawkes
32	Wild essen
76	Schlittschuhlaufen
	Die Festtage
96	Backen
114	Getränke
126	Heiligabend
136	Weihnachtsabend
184	„Boxing Day“
220	Die Reste verwenden
244	Silvester
254	Neujahr
296	Bildnachweis
298	Register





## Pagan feasts of Christmas past

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Christmas, as we know only too well, is a time for excess. A glut of grub, a few too many sherries . . . well, OK, way too many sherries, and everything else besides. But believe me, even Uncle George, who usually ends up blotto in front of James Bond, paper hat sitting askance upon his bald head, would have a problem with keeping up with old-fashioned Christmas. Back in the days before those bewhiskered Victorians cleaned it up, it was a wild, anarchic, full-powered pagan Bacchanalia, a twelve-day knees-up, fuelled by industrial quantities of booze, and much mischief and merry-making.

OK, I hear you mutter, so what's changed? Well, there was no Christmas tree, for starters, rather there were green boughs, brought into houses and churches on Christmas Eve, known as 'bringing home Christmas'.

Holly was said to scare away witches, while mistletoe, sacred to the ancient Britons, was also popular, known in the Middle Ages as 'all heal'. These traditions endure to this day. Rosemary, though, has become the long-forgotten ghost of Christmas past. Once hugely popular, a contrast to the dark green boughs, the legend goes that the flowers were originally white. When Our Lady spread her cloak on a rosemary bush during the flight to Egypt while she tended the Christ child, the flowers turned blue.

The yule log, too, transformed from a vast log, the largest that could be fitted into a fireplace, to a chocolate-covered confection. In its wooden form, it was intended to burn over the twelve days of Christmas. And it's not as if the Christmas festival was anything new. The Roman feast of Saturnalia was celebrated between the 17th and 21st of December,



followed, on the 22nd, by the Feast of Sigillaria, or the Feast of Dolls, where toys were handed out to children – a tradition that only took hold in Britain towards the middle of the eighteenth century. The 25th also celebrated Brumalia, or the birthday of the unconquered sun.

There was also a tradition of entertainment, stretching further back, even, than the Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special. *The Masque of Christmas* was created for James I by Ben Jonson, and featured Father Christmas and his ten sons, who included the Lord of Misrule (a throwback to the Middle Ages, where locals elected one man to reign between Hallowe'en and Christmas), Carol, Minced Pie, Gambol, Post and Pair, New Year's Gift, Mumming, Wassail, Offering and Baby Cake. Don't fancy that last one's chances at primary school.

Over-indulgence is nothing new. An old Italian saying goes that a busy person 'has more to do than the ovens in England at Christmas'. And food was always central to the celebrations. Not just a handful of dusty dates and a fistful of Quality Street, rather a mighty pie, and a magnificent boar's head, the centrepieces for the grand and well-to-do, as well as Oxford and Cambridge colleges and the Inns of Court. It would enter the room on a silver platter, garlanded with bay leaves, a lemon or roasted apple in its mouth, and sprigs of rosemary sprouting from its ears. Take that, turkey!

The Christmas pie was the edible, shortcrust-encased equivalent of Beowulf. Epic in every way. First take your pheasants. And hares, capons, partridges, pigeons and coneys. Bone them, and chop 'em fine. Add the liver and hearts of said beast and birds, along with





## PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM WELLINGTON

This is a fine Christmas Day vegetarian dish, a serious centrepiece packed with rich flavour. The recipe may look a bit epic upon first glance, but the sauce and caramelised onions can be made in advance.

Wipe the mushrooms with a piece of damp kitchen paper to remove dirt and grit; twist out and discard the stalks. Place in a large roasting tray with the garlic, thyme, Marsala, oil and salt and pepper. Rub each mushroom with the garlicky oil and cover the tray with tin foil. Place in an oven heated to 180°C/Gas Mark 4 for 15 minutes, until the mushrooms have reduced in size and are soft throughout. Remove the foil, drain away the cooking liquid and set the tray on a cool surface while you prepare the rest of the Wellington.

For the onions, melt the butter with the oil in a medium frying pan over a medium heat. When all the butter has melted, add the onions with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring regularly, until the onions turn soft and translucent. Add the thyme, garlic and Marsala to the pan and continue to cook for a further 15 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes until the onions are golden and caramelised all over. Remove the onions from the pan to a plate lined with kitchen paper to drain away the excess oil and butter. Leave to cool completely.

Next, make the pancakes. Whisk the eggs with the flour in a large mixing bowl, then slowly pour in the milk, whisking all the time until no lumps are visible. Add the chopped rosemary and season with salt and pepper. Cover with cling film and set aside for 10 minutes until bubbles appear on the surface of the batter.

Warm a 26cm non-stick frying pan with a splash of sunflower oil over a medium-high heat. Pour half a ladle of the pancake batter into the pan and swirl to evenly coat the base. Cook each pancake for a minute on each side, until lightly golden, then flip and cook the other side. The mixture should produce 6–8 thin pancakes.

Cook the spinach for a minute with a pinch of salt and a grating of nutmeg in a frying pan until bright green and just wilted. Squeeze out as much moisture as you can through a sieve, then dry on kitchen paper.

Lay out a 30cm piece of cling film on a clean work surface, then lay 4 cooled pancakes alongside each other on the cling film (you can

☞ enjoy this with a glass of Fortnum's Margaux

SERVES 4–6

- 8 large portobello mushrooms
- 2 garlic cloves, diced
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1 tablespoon Marsala
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 100g spinach
- 1/8 of a nutmeg, grated
- 3 egg yolks, beaten
- 1 x 320g ready-rolled puff pastry sheet
- 1 teaspoon black onion seeds

FOR THE CARAMELISED ONIONS

- 100g butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 white onions, sliced
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Marsala

FOR THE PANCAKES

- 3 eggs
- 100g plain flour
- 300ml whole milk
- 1 teaspoon chopped rosemary
- sunflower oil, for frying





## CHOCOLATE TRIFLE WITH GLACÉ FRUITS

There's rich. And then there's the downright decadent. And this awesome trifle falls plum into the latter category. Amaretti biscuit base for crunch, griottine cherries for rich flavour and decadence, along with a hint of cherry jam, all enveloped in the most magnificent of chocolate custards and topped with glacé fruits. Beware this trifle's power. One spoonful is never enough.

First make the chocolate custard. Beat the egg yolks, caster sugar and flour together in a bowl with a wooden spoon or a balloon whisk. Gradually mix in half the milk. Bring the remaining milk to boiling point in a saucepan, then gradually pour it on to the egg mix, beating constantly. Pour this custard into the pan and cook over a low to medium heat, stirring constantly, for 5–8 minutes, until thickened. As it starts to thicken, it will turn lumpy, but keep stirring and it will become smooth again. Strain the custard into a heatproof bowl through a sieve and stir in the chocolate until melted. Press a sheet of cling film on to the surface of the custard to prevent a skin forming and leave to cool.

To assemble the trifle, spread about half the cherry jam over the bottom of a trifle dish. Cover with the

amaretti biscuits and sprinkle the Marsala over them. Leave for about 5 minutes for the Marsala to soak in, then top with the chopped glacé pineapple and the cherries. Give the chocolate custard a good stir to loosen it (if it is too thick, add a little Marsala or water). Spread the custard over the fruit and leave in the fridge for 5 minutes.

Whip the cream until it forms peaks. Gently spread it on top of the chocolate custard. Loosen the remaining cherry jam with a little Marsala or water to make it easier to spread, then use to top the whipped cream. Scatter the chopped glacé fruits and flaked almonds on top. Chill for an hour before serving.

☞ what better than a glass of Fortnum's Cherry Ripe Liqueur

SERVES 6

- 170g cherry jam
- 100g amaretti biscuits
- 4 tablespoons Marsala, plus extra if needed
- 75g glacé pineapple, chopped
- 150g griottine cherries
- 350ml double cream
- 220g mixed glacé fruits, such as cherries, melon, orange, kiwi and figs, chopped
- 1 tablespoon flaked almonds, lightly toasted in a dry frying pan

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CUSTARD

- 3 egg yolks
- 50g caster sugar
- 45g plain flour
- 350ml milk
- 100g dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), chopped





